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ADELBERT FARRINGTON CALDWELL



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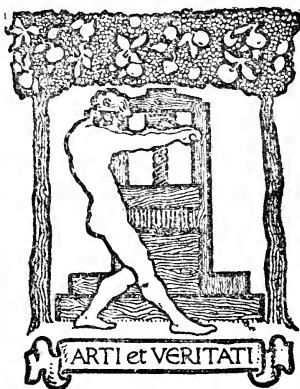
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The Barefoot Time

Adelbert Farrington Caldwell



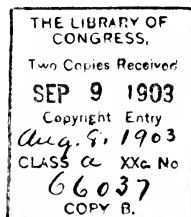
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To My Mother

Whose sharing my pleasures then, makes cherished
the memories of childhood now.

PREFACE

Many of the selections of this little volume of child's verse have appeared from time to time in "The Youth's Companion", "Ladies' World", "Farm and Home", "Outlook", "Sunday School Times", "Forward", and "The Independent"; and if, in bringing them together, occasionally here and there verses a trifle beyond "the barefoot time" have crept in, perhaps they were not unintentionally admitted for "children of a larger growth".

A. F. C.

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THE BAREFOOT TIME

*Oh, the golden age of the barefoot time,
While life was a fairy tale sung in rhyme,
When phantoms grim of a future day
Were hid in the mists of the far away;
When we carved for ourselves from our June day-
dreams*

*(Only yesterday now it seems),
Statues of greatness, Jim and I,
In the mystical realm of the By-and-By!
Off for a swim on an afternoon,—
The moments — why would they fly so soon!
At the gate stood mother, who never was strong:
“ I shall worry, boys, if you stay too long.”*

*Gone are the days of the long ago,—
O lagging Time, now you move so slow!
The rosy skies of our barefoot days
Lie hidden from view by a misty haze.
Jim he got tired and slipped away,—
Left me alone to swim and play;
The statues of greatness — in vain we planned,—
Never appeared from the sculptor's hand!
And there came a day, I its reckoning keep,
When mother, worn out, just dropped asleep,—
Her voice melting into an angel's song:
“ I shall wait at the Gate, so don't stay too long.”*

THE OLD FOLKS IN THE COUNTRY

I'm a-goin' to leave the country,—
Old folks say 'tis nice and clean,
Nothin' like its air and sunshine
In the city's ever seen.
Only filth and smoke and odors,
In the city, they allow,—
But the old folks in the country
Don't know nothin', anyhow !

They say there they don't have sunset
Pictures painted on the sky,
There the birds don't do their courtin'
In the meadows on the sly ;
There's no hide-and-seek, they tell me,
In the hay upon the mow,—
But the old folks in the country
Don't know nothin', anyhow !

There they say the folks are worried,
Till their minds they almost lose.
No one stops his horse to ask you,
All a-smilin', " What's the news? "
There they don't have any neighbors,
When they're sick, as we do now,—
But the old folks in the country
Don't know nothin', anyhow !

They say there is so much sorrow,
 Crime and trouble, sin and shame ;
But as far as I can reckon,
 It's not the city that's to blame.
They say folks don't mind the Bible,
 That they're always in a row,—
But the old folks in the country
 Don't know nothin', anyhow !

Yes ; I said I'd leave the country,
 But I'm back again, you see ;
Neighbors, birds, and flowers, and sunsets,
 They are good enough for me.
Hear that whip-poor-will at vespers ?
 There, he's almost over now.
Ah, the old folks in the country
 Do know somethin', anyhow !

WORK

Work, like a giant, blocked the path,—
 I trembled in dismay,
Till Method urged, “ Attack in parts ! ”
 Work's but a dwarf to-day.

QUEER LITTLE HISTORIANS

Just a raindrop loitering earthward,
All alone,
Leaves a tiny "telltale story"
In the stone.

Gravel tossed by teasing water,
Down the hill,
Shows where once in merry laughter
Flowed a rill.

In the coal bed dark and hidden,
Ferns (how queer!)
Left a message plainly saying,
"We've been here!"

You may see where tiny ripples,
On the sands,
Leave a history written by their
Unseen hands.

Why, the oak trees, by their bending,
Clearly show
The direction playful winds blew
Years ago!

So our *habits* tell us, little
Maids and men,
What the history of our whole past
Life has been!

THEN AND NOW

Said Aaron 1400, a mediæval boy,
“ I’ll tell you what I’d like so well to know :
How far the moon is from us, the sun’s diameter,
And how one may predict the rain and snow !
I’d like to know the reason for the lightning in the
sky,
What makes the ocean tides to rise and fall,
Why, when you let a body drop, it quickly falls to
earth,
And if the world we live on can really be a ball !
Oh, I’d go to school and study every minute in the
day ;
For all such curious knowledge how I’d strive !
If I could only know these things ” — he gave a
troubled sigh,—
“ I’d really be the happiest boy alive ! ”

But Willie 1900 said (a present-century lad),
“ I wish I’d lived five hundred years ago ;
This spending time in school-rooms — oh, I wouldn’t
have to do,
For then these things they didn’t have to know !
It’s a nuisance reading history — they didn’t have
much then,
And as for science — my ! ’twas jolly fun,
For there wasn’t electricity or sound for boys to
learn,—

The discoverers weren't born — or hardly one !
I'd like to live as boys did ten hundred years ago,
'Cause *they* had nothing else to do but play !
If there wasn't anything to learn, or more than they
 had *then*,
My ! wouldn't I be happy *every day* ! ”

BOB'S QUANDARY

I s'pose my head is like a chest,
With drawers and things inside ;
Some small for dates and words to spell,—
The rest just deep and wide,
For states 'bout which I'll have to learn,
And products, grain and wool !
But what I'll do I'd like to know,—
When every drawer is full !

FIVE SPINNERS

Seated on the village wharf,
Where the steamers come and go,
Skipper Bailey spins and spins,
Ending always, "Don't you know?"

By the dear old kitchen hearth,
Briskly walking to and fro,
Grandma, singing, spins and spins,—
Years ago 'twas always so.

O'er a cave in time of Bruce,
Now in attic corners high;
What is it that spins and spins?
Ah, be wary, little fly!

Out along the country road,
Over hills and through the vale,
Brother Johnny spins and spins,
In the early morning pale.

'Mid balls and blocks and Noah's Ark,
Playing on the parlor floor,
Willie, laughing, spins and spins,—
Round it turns, then tumbles o'er.

Think now of these outs and ins,
Then tell what each spins and spins.

THE TENEMENT BABIES

Shut off from the world with its light and love,
A joyless prison-house save in name,
With waves of sweltering heat from above,—
From around each corner one meets the same!
Only ill-smelling and fetid air
Is breathed by the babies God leases there!

Not a butterfly blown from the hills of green,
Gives a hint of the wonderful life without;
Not a rainbow of promise is ever seen,—
Nothing but crime and disease about!
No vesper bell calls to praise and prayer,—
Poor little dwarf souls starving there!

Never a carol or note of bird,
As he melts away in the azure blue,
From the tenement house is ever heard;
Nor is felt the wealth of diamond dew,—
Only curses and oaths fill the smoky air,
To poison the babies God leases there!

Poor little tenement souls that grow
Away from the flowers — by bricks shut in;
Never the sweetness of life to know,
Only surrounded by crime and sin!
The pleasures of living you sure should share,—
Dear little babies God leases there!

A FISHING SEER

He sat for hours on the bank that day,
With a serious look — most fishermen's way,—
Just a waif of a lad with a brimless hat,
And pantaloons even much worse than that.
Dangling legs, without stockings on,
Showed many a mark of brier and thorn,
But indifferent he to trifles like these,
As he sat and fished in the teasing breeze.
I paused as I passed on my way to town,
And set for a moment my burden down :
“ Aren't you discouraged,” I said with zest,
“ Fishing so long here without success? ”
“ Oh, no ! such fishing just pleases me,”
The lad said slowly, “ for don't you see,
We can't all catch — and I for one,
In just *a-trying* get lots of fun ! ”
I picked up my burden and walked away,
Wise with the lesson I'd learned that day,
And silently blessed my new-found seer,—
This ragged, fishing philosopher !

JUST A-WISHING

The boy who's always wishing,—
 Why, we pass him on the street,
We see him in the office,
 On the gridiron we meet;
It may be in the morning,
 It's just the same at night,
He's wishing things would change a bit;
 They're not exactly right.

He wishes he were smart like Tom,
 But then, Tom has a "snap",—
To him things are so easy;
 He doesn't care a "rap"
How long and hard the lesson.
 But isn't this the way:
While Tom is hard a-grinding,
 He is wasting time in play?

He wishes he had money,
 Just enough to treat a friend;
He cannot see how Henry
 Has all he wants to spend.
But while he's idly wishing
 He were rich like Carl or Bob,
Henry has his coat off working,—
 He has found an honest job.

He wishes he could bat the ball,
Or kick a goal like Dick,
But when it's time for practice,
He feels a trifle sick.
And thus he keeps a-wishing,
Never thinks "I can", and "will";
So where'er you chance to meet him,
You will find him wishing still.

A PRISON HOUSE

High are its walls so you can't see o'er,
And so narrow are they that one can't get in;
Nor outward swings its close-barred door
Of Love, to welcome one's kith and kin.
The shutter of Sympathy's never drawn
To send forth a message of hope and cheer;
The flag on the tower, from eve till dawn,
Reads, "I live alone; please don't come near."
"And who is the inmate, — some witch or elf?
And the name of the house? I cannot guess!"
The inmate's a shriveled-up dwarf called Self,
And the narrow house is Selfishness!

THE LITTLE HAIR TRUNK

There's a little hair trunk in the attic stored,
Under the rafters packed away ;
With a heart nigh broken, a mother's hands
Tenderly carried it there one day.
The tears fell fast as she closed the lid
On the homely trinkets — you'll call them so, —
That her baby loved, then with one more kiss
On the little hair trunk, she turned to go.

Now on the lid is the dust of years, —
I wonder what think all the toys within !
Do they wish for the baby voice, still so long,
To arouse them once more with its boyish din?
In the attic I happened to be one day,
I couldn't help taking a tiny peep, —
They were just as he left them, every one, —
Oh, well, perhaps it was foolish to weep !

A bottle of beans (they were yellow and black) ;
He called them his "stock," which he bought and
sold ;
A "Mother Goose Rhymes" — and his finger prints
Were still on its covers, now ragged and old !
A "Dinah" doll, without any hair, —
All these I found — the others you know,
For perhaps a like little trunk you placed
Under the rafters, too, long ago !

MR. FROG'S WISDOM

Long years ago, as I've been told, a Frog and a speckled Trout

Had in the cool of an old mill stream somewhat of a "falling out".

"'Tis foolishness," said Mr. Trout, and the spots on his sides grew red,

"To do as you do — I wonder who's been putting such stuff in your head!

It's best you'll find, to spend your time, in studying swimming lore,

Learning to dive and float instead of hopping along on shore.

To excel in a single thing is better'n a little of this and that,—

Not to see it thus you really must be 'most as blind as a bat!

I'm going to practice to swim my best, and when one is wanted, see!

To serve some benevolent gentleman — who will he choose but me!"

Respectfully the Frog heard all that his friend, Mr. Trout, did say:

"I thank you much for your counsel, sir; I'll meditate it, good day."

But he didn't take Mr. Trout's advice, and this is the reason why, —

“To know but one craft — one’s chance to succeed
in life is lessened thereby;
So I think I’ll go on in the same old way my fathers
did before,—
Their skill in swimming was none the less for the
fact that they hopped on shore!”
At last it was time for Frog and Trout their lifework
to begin,
So they eagerly scanned the papers o’er to see what
“ads” were in.
One day they found among the “wants” a place
with tip-top pay,
And they packed their grips and started out at dawn
the following day.
“I s’pose you can swim?” asked Mr. Seal, whose
valet was soon to go.
“Indeed we can!” and off came coats their prowess
and skill to show.
Out to the buoy and back again—the Trout came
in ahead.
“It’s all because he shunned advice,” Mr. Trout
with a chuckle said.
“Ah, very well done! I think you’ll do—your
work, to patrol the shore,
And when you see any men with clubs don’t tarry
a moment more,
But hurry to warn me as I take in the surf my morn-
ing bath”,—

Mr. Frog stood by with moistened eye — his tears
were not of wrath,
As his friend, Mr. Trout, on the shore about, in pain
began to flop,—
“ Oh, you’re no good,” called Mr. Seal. “ The one
who serves me must *hop!* ”

STRANGE PEOPLE

“ What funny western people,
To sit around a table ! ”

Smiled Wo Yen Locks.

“ And eat their funny victuals,
Boiled in iron kettles,
With knives and forks ! ”

“ What funny orientals,
To squat down on the floor,—

(My, what a fix !)

To eat their rice and honey,”
Laughed Beth (“ how very funny !)
With queer chop-sticks ! ”

BOBBY DREAMED

That oranges plump grew on holly-hock stalks,
And lollipops rained all around ;
That chocolate drops and candy canes
Sprung up like mere weeds from the ground !
That each dewdrop he saw was a colored balloon ;
That jack-knives like birds flew about,
(To fill up his pocket — all one had to do,
Was to chase them a moment about) ;
That every pebble or stone by the road
Was a coin, either silver or gold :
That it took but a minute to gather them up,—
As many's you could possibly hold !
“ How splendid to live in this wonderful land ! ”
And he gave his blue cap a slight twirl ;
“ I'd stay here forever — if it weren't I'm afraid
I might wake up to-morrow a *girl* ! ”

HARD THINGS

Love makes not hard things *easy* ; no,
Nor lighter painful stings,—
Love makes us *willing*, each to do
Without complaint hard things !

HOW THE CAMEL GOT HIS HUMP

In Camel Land — 'twas years ago,
(As all the early records show) —
Mr. and Mrs. Camel, tall,
Had on their backs no hump at all.

They were as proud as proud could be
Of their physique — as one could see.
At home they used to joke and laugh,
Because so stooped their friend Giraffe !

When their two babies came to bless
Their home with camel loveliness,
Their joy was full. “ Dear wife,” said he,
“ Our boys are straight as straight can be ! ”

But when their age was six or eight,
(It pains me this fact to relate),
The parents' counsels (so they say),
The boys neglected to obey.

“ Oh, sit up straight ! ” the mother cried,
When their round shoulders she espied.
“ You'll be humpbacked unless you do,”
The father said — “ a thing you'll rue ! ”

But, no ! the boys had their own way,
Refusing counsel to obey,
Until — too late to change, alack !
Each had a hump upon his back !

A SUMMER TASK

How the birds all build their nests,
How the woodchuck digs his hole,
Why the husband is more colored
Than is Mrs. Oriole,
Why the rabbit's dark in summer,
When in winter he's so white,
What becomes of Baby Partridge
When its mother takes affright,
How she also is a drummer,—
Mrs. Partridge. 'course I mean,—
How the bee obtains its honey,
Why its cells one form are seen,—
Won't I have a jolly summer;
Not a single thing to do,
But to learn these nature secrets,—
Then I'll whisper them to you!

CHARACTER

It blazes not like a meteor forth,
A flash, and then swift to die.
Like a star unseen through the clouds and mist,
It steadily shines, while by darkness kissed,
As it does in the azure sky!

THE ATTIC RUBBISH

I climbed the stairs with grandma,—
'Twas not very long ago,
To the attic — full of rubbish;
(P'r'aps I shouldn't call it so),
For her lips were all a-tremble,
As she whispered low, " You see,
Child, no one can ever realize
The scenes they all bring back to me !"

Then she drew into the sunlight,
From a corner, almost hid,
The quaintest, oddest hair trunk,
With brass nail words on the lid !
Lifting it, she took out slowly
(Once she wore it — you can guess),
Just the daintiest of garments,—
A faded, sleeveless bridal dress.

Just beneath there lay a sampler,
Folded o'er some rose leaves wild;
" This," she said (I scarcely heard it),
" This I did when but a child."
Near by stood a tiny flax-wheel,—
Round and round the wheel she turned,
As with it, a blushing maiden,
She her wedding " outfit " earned.

Then beside a wooden cradle,
Grandma in an arm-chair sat ;
Rocked it back and forward gently,
With her foot — yet stranger'n that,
Sang : “ *Hush, my dear, lie still and slumber*”,—
And with such a yearning tone,
I softly stole away and left her,
With her dream scenes all alone !

A WEED

A careless gipsy vagrant,
Out at play,
'Midst the corn rows loitering,
Lost its way.
Climbing up a friendly stalk,
Weed Bo-peep
Twines its tendril arms about and
Falls asleep.

REGRET

Regret — so bitter was the shame !
Confessed ('twas with a yearning sigh),
“ You'd scarce believe — alas ! 'tis true ;
Once Opportunity was I ! ”

HIS CHANGE OF NAME

They called him Guy, and he did much
And oft his parents blame :
“ They might have given me,” he said,
“ A pretty *Bible* name ! ”
“ Well, we might change,” his mother thought ;
When father heard the news,
He paused a moment, then agreed,
“ I’m willing — you may choose :
Mahalaleel, Ham, Shem, or Cain,
Methuselah, Ludim,
Sidon, Serug, Arphaxad, Reu,
Nahor, or Naphtuhim,
Peleg, Terah, Hazarmaveth,
Eber, Hul, Uz, Diklah,
Jobab, Joktan, Sheleph, Obal,
Anamim, Phut, Jerah !
Ashkenaz, Gomer, Togarmah,
Sabtah, Raamah, Kittim,
Meshech, Accad, Calneh, Erech,
Melchizedek, Casluhim ? ”
“ Are — are those Bible names ? ” he said,
And drew a heavy sigh :
“ I think, papa, if you don’t mind,
I’m *satisfied* with Guy ! ”

WITH OUTSTRETCHED CUP

A tiny blossom,—
Just a lone weed beside the garden wall,
Ragged, a little vagrant beggar,
Pleading for a drop of sunshine — that was all !

There I beheld it,
Lifting from the tangled grass its outstretched cup,—
“Take, too, my empty life,” I cried. “With Thy
 unfailing mercies
Fill it up !”

THE CONQUEROR

An angry Word rushed forward,
“I’ll settle the matter,” said he ;
But the struggle was only augmented
By the harsh Word’s agency.
Then a Tear of Forgiveness unbidden,
Born of a thought above,
Stepped in without boast or notice,—
And Enmity changed to Love.

FATHER'S ADVICE

Back on the farm in the fifties,
How often I heard father say,
“Don't growl if you can't have it all, boy,
Take what you can get—that's the way!”

There were days in the spring during planting,
When I couldn't go over the hill,
With my books and slate strapped on my shoulder,
To the little red school by the mill.

“Never mind,” father said, at my pouting,
“If you do have to stay home, my lad,
There are weeks of the term yet before you,
Take what you can get and be glad!”

We often for birds went a-hunting,—
There was game in the woods in his day,
And wasn't it just jolly tramping,—
I really wished no better play!

But oh! it was so disappointing,
When only one bird I would hit;
“Cheer up!” father's voice was so merry,
“And be glad of the one you did get!”

There are shrubs in the path by the schoolhouse,
I stay now at home every day,
But not to drop corn for my father,—
Long ago was his hoe hung away.

But I hear those wise words when I grumble,
Just as sweet as of old and as mild :
“ You can't have it all, so be thankful
With what you can get of it, child ! ”

ONE GUIDE

How strange for worlds above,
Unnumbered stars, to know,
Through space unlimited,
Just where to go !
Within their trackless course,
They vary not, nor fear
(Their Maker gave command)
Of any danger near.
His laws they steadfast heed,
Afar off in the blue,—
The God who guides unnumbered stars,
Guides you.

LITTLE POLLY MARY

Little Polly Mary, all the morning hour,
Doted on her bonnet with its bright new flower,
Wondered if the next day would be bright and clear,
Wished the jolly holidays came twenty times a year,
Looked without the window when the teacher didn't
see,

Watched a golden robin building in the tree —
AND —

When the hour came all too quick for Polly to recite,
Will you believe, she never got a single answer
right!

So for failure, on the record-book, her name, alas!
was starred,

But was it 'cause, as Polly thought, the lesson was so
hard!

TEDDY'S QUERY

One brother was tall and slim,
The other chubby and short,—
Teddy sat looking at them one night,
Apparently lost in thought.

“Mamma,” he asked, at length,
“Which would you like the best,—
For me to grow *north* and *south*, like Tom,
Or like Willie, from *east* to *west*?”

THE SEVEN SLEEPERS

Curly-headed Baby Tom
Sleeps in cozy blankets warm,
In his crib.

Bob-o'-Lincoln — oh, so wise !
Goes to sleep 'neath sunny skies,
'Mid the leaves.

Mr. Bruin, night and day,
Snoozes all his time away,
In his cave.

Squirrel-Red, with nuts — a store !
In hollow tree-trunk loves to snore,
In the wood.

Mrs. Woodchuck 'neath some knoll,
Drowzes in her bed — a hole !
Deep in earth.

Floweret bulbs nestled together,
Doze all through the wintry weather,
'Neath the snow.

In the chrysalis hard by,
Dreams the sometime butterfly,
In corner hid.

Oh, what beds ! So very queer !
Yet to each one just as dear
As yours to you !

BRIDGES WE NEVER CROSS

We fall in the habit too often I fear,
Of crossing the bridges we never draw near ;
Though they loom up before us — they seem just
ahead,
There's a turn and our feet are in other paths led.

We dread the to-morrow, its toil and its care,
And feel that its burdens we never can bear ;
But when the to-morrow blends into to-day,
The yesterday's burdens have all slipped away !

Too often we hear : " Yes ; 'tis pleasant this morn,
But it's a weather breeder, sure's you are born ! "
So, much of God's sunshine and beauty about
Is forced from our lives by " perhaps " or a doubt !

Make use of the present — to-morrow may wait, —
To-day's joys *to-morrow* are realized too late !
Let none of life's pleasures, God-given, be lost,
By crossing a bridge — till it has to be crossed !

A POOR TOWN TO LIVE IN

There's a queer little town—I wonder if you've
seen it,—

“Let-some-one-else-do-it” is the name of the
place,

And all of the people who've lived there for ages,
Their family tree from the Wearies can trace !

The streets of this town, so ill-kept and untidy,
And almost deserted from morning till noon,
Are “In-just-a-minute” — you'll see on the lamp-
post,—

“O-well-there's-no-hurry,” and “Yes-pretty-
soon.”

The principal work that they do in this hamlet,
(There isn't a person who thinks it a crime),
Is loafing and dozing, but most of the people
Are engaged in the traffic of *just-killing-time* !

I pray you, don't dwell in this town overcrowded ;
There are others near by it most wondrous fair ;
The roads that lead to them—and each one is open,—
Are “Push,” “Pluck,” and “Ready,” “This
minute,” and “Dare.”

WITH THOSE WHO CAN'T KEEP UP

It is human nature maybe to be borne 'long with the
crowd,

And when they shout and hollo, to hollo just as loud;
But there's a sight o' pleasure like a draught from
nectar's cup,

In just a-loitering back along with those who can't
keep up.

One needn't think the only men God ever made are
those

Who wear the finest linen and the latest cut in
clothes,—

I find patriotism, honor, and fidelity to truth,
In the man whose outward bearing often is the most
uncouth.

In the weather-beaten cottage where the eaves 'most
touch the door,

Whose shingles are quite hidden with the moss that's
gathered o'er,

There is still the old-time altar, where duly morn and
night,

The inmates bow and ask the Lord to guide their
steps aright.

The gentlest words are spoken when the heart is sad
with woe,
And the rarest wisdom emanates from those whose
steps are slow,
And those whose eyes are blind to sights that glisten
for a day,
See glories far transcendent that can never fade away.
So I like to loiter back a bit; the crowd may surge
along.
Perhaps for some it's pleasant thus to jostle with the
throng;
But I find my life grows richer, even drinking sor-
row's cup,
With the weary and unfortunate who cannot quite
keep up!

HEROES

There are heroes who fall 'mid the carnage of battle,
There are those who meet death on the foam,—
But greater are those who, unheralded, battle
With Fate for the loved ones at home!

IN SLEIGHING TIME

There is magic in the jingle of the sleighbells, don't
you know,

That sets the blood a-tinglin' till the cheeks are all
a-glow ;

An' the cares that press upon one, in the merry
winter weather,

At the jingle of the sleighbells dance off lighter than
a feather,—

How the jingle,

An' the ringle,

Raises lowest spirits high !

Hark ! the tingle,

Jingle, tingle !

As the cutter dashes by !

When the moon is bright a-shinin' an' a-sparkle is
the snow,

'Tis the plainest invitation just invitin' one to go

For a rollic an' a frolic 'hind a pair of prancin'
steeds,—

The very kind of tonic that a tired body needs,—

How the jingle,

An' the ringle,

In the crisp an' frosty air,

An' the tingle,

Jingle, tingle,

Hypnotizes anxious care !

E'en the stars are all a-twinkle! Hear the merry
coasters shout!
Happiness is everywhere a-lyin' loose about!
Everybody is as joyful as a new-anointed king,—
Age an' wrinkles hide their faces while the magic
sleighbells ring,—
Hark! the jingle,
An' the ringle,—
It just sets your soul a-rhyme
With the tingle,
Jingle, tingle,
Of the magic sleighbells' chime!

PROTECTED

I've built a wall about me,
To keep all foes without,—
Anxiety, with all her train,
And the grim monster, Doubt!
You ask my name? 'Tis Happiness,
With which no foe can cope!
The wall I've built cannot be scaled,—
Its quarried blocks are Hope.

GRANDMOTHER'S STITCHES

What had happened to Emily Foote?
Every button was gone from her boot!
She noticed that morning that *one* was loose;
“I'll fix it at bedtime!” Ah, little the use!
“Remember my stitches,” grandmother said,
As she kindly nodded her dear, wise head.
“A ‘corner rent’ in my dress, that’s all,”
And Mary ran for her cap and shawl.
“I'll mend it soon — now there isn't *time*!”
How she wished she'd heeded her grandmother's
rhyme!
The rent grew long and ever so wide,
And kept her at home from the picnic ride.
Teddy was playing with ball and bat.
“I've started a stitch!” “Oh, never mind that,”
Answered his chum, jolly Archibald May,
“'Twill last as long as we want to play!”
“But grandmother says—” “Oh, bother such
things!”
So soon, the ball was but leather and strings.
And grandmother's stitches — yours and mine?
“A stitch in *time*, my dear, saves *nine*!”

FOUR TO ONE

“I’m sorry,” said Mary, “it’s rainy to-day;
When *I* want it pleasant it’s always the way;
It rains, rains, rains!”

“To-day I can finish my book,” said Dean;
“It’s the jolliest one I ever have seen;
For it rains, rains, rains!”

“It will fill up the swimming-hole, p’r’aps,” said Ted.
“I can dive like a frog if it’s over my head;
Glad it rains, rains, rains!”

“To-day,” said Herr Steuber, “my plants I’ll set
out;
I feared they would die because of the drought.
Ha! it rains, rains, rains!”

“The weather ’ll be cooler, and Aunt Polly Haynes
May get over her fever,” said Lou, “if it rains—
If it rains, rains, rains!”

“I am so glad since such good can be done,”
Said Mary, her face bright as yesterday’s sun,
“That it rains, rains, rains!”

THE NEW GLASSES

The queerest thing happened ('twas not long ago),
To Miss Betty Pringle. Perhaps you don't know
That it made little difference what came to her sight,
There never was anything really quite right !
The grass was too green, and the sky was too gray,
And the wind never blew in a suitable way, —
If it came from the east it was brewing a storm,
If it blew from the south 'twas oppressively warm !
If the sun shone at all, it was always too bright,
And she wished it would hurry and set for the night.
If a friend came to see her with something new on,
'Twas "to show off her gewgaws, as sure's you are
born;"

If a package were left in which dainties were found,
She knew that her friend had an axe to be ground.
And so it went on for a twelvemonth or more,
Till a queer little stranger appeared at her door,
With a case of new glasses of marvellous power,
That would change one's whole vision in less than an
hour !

At his rat-a-tat-tat ! Betty Pringle came out,
Much surprised at her brisk little caller, no doubt !
"Good morning, my lady !" he said with a smile.
"No, no ; I'll not step in — it's hardly worth while.
I've heard that your glasses (I cannot tell where)
Are of a very poor make — p'r'aps you'd like a new
pair."

And will you believe it, new ones she did take,
In exchange for her own of the "fault-finding make"!
And now Betty's happy's a queen need to be,
For the beauty about her she's able to see!

THE TWO WAYS

The ways diverged — I wondered which I'd take,
And as I paused, I watched the people throng
Out of the Somewhere, each with hurrying feet,—
To right, to left, they hastened all day long!
They bore a heavy burden as they passed,
(With every single one it was the same),
And each was plainly marked, so all could read
(I marvelled greatly at the fact), "My Aim."
And those who took the beaten path, I saw
Soon laid their burden down and gazed around.
Allured by vain enticements all about,
They left their "Aim" forgotten on the ground!
But those who took the other way pressed on,
Nor feared for pleasure's sake their "Aim" to lose,—
I now perceived this path was Duty, so
No longer pondered which I ought to choose.

A WISE WAITING

A blushing little Mayflower
 Turned away her head,
Too polite to let a weed
 Hear a word she said.

“I don’t think it nice at all,
 (I would make a fuss),
Goldenrod should bloom, of course,
 In the spring with us !

“It is hard to wait so long,
 Till midsummer hours ;
I should get discouraged, quite,
 Waiting so for flowers.”

Near the wall a modest plant
 Twinkled in the dew ;
She heard all that had been said,—
 Mayflower never knew.

Soon she whispered to a robin ;
 He her secret told,—
“All this waiting means a changing
 Into sunny gold !”

THE VISITANT

In middle age, before the hearth,
Deeply absorbed in counting o'er
Successes won, he hardly heard
The fall of footsteps on the floor.

Behind his chair a fair Youth stood,
In phantom shape, and listening heard :
“ I'm happier now than when a boy ! ” —
The visitant neither turned nor stirred.

Tenderly sad, Lost Youth mused low,
“ He's gained at length Fortune's bequest,—
When I slipped slowly from his grasp,
He cried, ‘ My Boyhood days are best ! ’
But, no — though learned 'mid falling tears,—
One's best days come with Manhood's years ! ”

WORK AND WORRY

Discouraged and sad, Work came home, worn out,
(Only a part of his task was done),
And the Master asked in an anxious tone,
If he had been hindered by any one.
“ A stranger stood by as I toiled,” he said,
“ A being possessed of gigantic frame ! ”
“ He's stolen your strength,” the Master cried,
“ And Worry — too true—is the monster's name ! ”

THE PRIZE WINNER

“The world owes me a living,” p'r'aps you've heard
a body say,
“It is best to take life easy—'tis, in fact, the only way.”
So with loiterers and sluggards he in base content-
ment lies,
While the man who works and struggles is the one
who wins the prize.

Some grope always in the valley — really can they
ever stop
To consider what enchantment hovers round the
mountain top?
But the man who clambers upward, step by step the
weary rise,
Obtains vistas only dreamed of — he's the one who
wins the prize!

Some wait ever for the morrow — let the present
hours slip by :
“So little can be done to-day, what's the use to try?”
Notice, he who grasps the moments, lad, every one
that flies,
Is the man in life's sharp contest who obtains the
victor's prize.

TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW

TO-DAY

A sunless sky,
Unaccomplished aim,
The flag of Hope at half mast furled,—
A bitter cry,
“I’ve tried — no gain,—
O empty, disappointing world!”

TO-MORROW

A rosy light,
Success attained,
The banner of Victory to the breezes hurled,—
A cry of might,
“The mastery gained,
Hail! glorious, God-given world!”

A BEAUTIFUL RESULT

A beautiful smile in His service,
A beautiful word of cheer,
A beautiful act unselfish,
A beautiful hint, “He’ll hear.”
A beautiful tear sympathetic,
A beautiful allaying of strife,
A beautiful touch of a brother,—
The result is a beautiful life.

THE CRIPPLED HERO

(A CUBAN INCIDENT)

Pedro Rionda and his sons,
 Leandro and Ramé,
Had left th' insurgent army
 For a visit home that day.

And ere the time came to depart,
 To join their ranks once more,
José, the little crippled son,
 Chanced to glance out the door.

His pinched face suddenly grew white,—
 Yet calm he turned about;
“Father, Leandro, Ramé — quick!
 The Spanish are without!”

Pedro Rionda's heart stood still,
 He grasped his trusty gun,—
A Spanish army couldn't make
 A Cuban patriot run!

His breath came quick — he thought aloud,
 “ If we should face the band,
They are too many — there'd be three,—
 Three less to save the land!

“ Oh, God! it is the only thing!
 It's one or three — José!

Think you could keep the devils back
Till we are safe away !
“It may be death,” he spoke it soft,
“When they don’t find us here,—
Our country needs her able men ;
Speak, José, have you fear?”
“No ; father, no — quick, brothers, go !
It’s all I have to give,—
It matters not if I am shot,—
Our country — it must live ! ”
One long embrace — and they are off !
Bang ! bang ! ’t was José’s gun,—
The Spanish balls came whizzing fast,—
He met them, one by one.
And when his ammunition’s spent,
The three are safe away,—
The Spaniards, crazed at their repulse,
Rush in on brave José !
“Where, where,—and are the rebels fled,
Are they escaped through *you* ? ”
They madly grasped the crippled boy,
While flashing swords they drew.
All honor be to Cuba’s sons
(But let this not suffice)
Who perished on the field — *there’s*, too,
The cripple’s sacrifice !

MR. BUSHEL'S HOSPITALITY

Four brothers by the name of Peck,
 (All Mr. Bushel's kin),
As often as one desires it,
 Are taken by him in.

Eight sisters, the Misses Gallon,
 When the four Peck brothers are out,
In Mr. Bushel's quarters
 Have room to move about.

Thirty-two cousins, the Quarts — ah, me!
 What *will* Mr. Bushel do?
Polite and open, he smiles and says,
 “ I'm alone, so there's room for *you* ! ”

A jingling crowd — the sixty-four Pints,
 To shelter them, no fun!
Mr. Bushel laughs, “ I'm empty now,
 Walk in, come, every one ! ”

Two hundred and fifty-six baby Gills,
 The tiniest friends and shy,—
“ Can we *all* come in ? ” Mr. Bushel replies,
 “ I can hold you and not half try ! ”

A jolly good fellow to entertain all,
 This Mr. Bushel must be!
He takes them only one group at a time,—
 And each group *makes* him, you see!

THE WISH-MAN

A funny little Wish-Man came out of the Somewhere
here,
(You really should have seen him, he looked so wondrous queer) ;
He had a pack upon his back, stuffed full as full could
be,
Of wishes for the boys and girls — those living near
to me.
He said he'd indirectly heard — he couldn't tell just
where,—
That in the town of Discontent were many dwelling
there,
Who wished for this and wished for that (it really
was too bad),
It made but little difference what, long's 't wasn't
what they had !
Accordingly, he stuffed his pack (and tied around a
band),
With every single kind of wish now found within the
land,
And fared he forth from house to house, to please the
people all,
And dealt out every kind of wish for which he had a
call.
To one 't was wealth — a sordid wish ; another called
for joy ;

One asked for ease ; one beauty took — a worthless
sort of toy !
And so he gave them this and that, and all seemed
happy quite,
For which the Wish-Man naturally took very keen
delight.
But when a stranger passed the town of Discontent,
he saw
('Twas just a short time after this) what filled him
quite with awe ;
No merry whistle, smile nor laugh could be perceived
at all,—
What dire disaster could have brought upon the town
this pall !
He called upon a wealthy youth, who said, “ I'm all
at sea,—
What stocks to buy, how to invest — it almost crazes
me !
Before a rich man I became, I had all sorts of fun,
But since my wish, a moment's joy I haven't had,
not one ! ”
And thus 'twas so all through the town. Each testi-
fied the same ;
Not one was half so happy as before the Wish-Man
came.
“ Ah, ha ! ” Perhaps by this you've guessed who
was the stranger man ;

If not, by throwing out this hint, I'm very sure you
can!
That night, when everything was still, there crept
from room to room,
Some one who gathered up each wish that caused such
direful gloom,
And when old Sol arose next day, and scattered sun-
beams down,
They fell upon—the name was changed—upon
Contented Town!

A LITTLE MATHEMATICIAN

“Eight long furlongs I've gone to-day!”
With evident pride said Ethel May.

“Three hundred and twenty rods, you know,
Is what I've been,” — 'twas brother Joe.

“One thousand, seven hundred and sixty — true!
So many yards I've walked,” said Prue.

“Five thousand, two hundred and eighty feet
I've gone,” said Ben, “and it can't be beat!”

“Pooh!” laughed Ted, with a knowing smile,
“You've only gone, each one, a mile!”

THE CASTLE OF MY DREAMS

The castle I love is not set on a hill,
No flag from its turret waves,
No water flows in its outer moat,
Nor its rock foundation laves.
My castle is old and its doors flap loose,
As though wringing in grief its hands,—
Out by the wall, near the cherry trees,
The barn of my childhood stands !

Empty the mows where from robbers fierce,
We hid in the days gone by,
Vacant the stall where Old Dolly stood,
And watched as we played "I-spy !"
Down in the bay only cobwebs now,—
To my child eyes once so deep,
Where secure from escape our prisoners found
Themselves in that dungeon-keep !

Sometimes on the clean-swept floor we spread
Our feasts ('twas baronial hall)
Of meats and wines from far over the seas,—
Bread and water composed them all !
But never did lord or lady show
Disrespect to the loyal host,
By a *look* that the board did not heavily groan
With all dainties the world could boast.

A heartless echo now only sounds
From rafter back to sill,
When I call as I did — was it *yesterday?* —
To Rachel and Tom and Will.
It seems that each beam sadly sighs with me
For the days we were wont to play,
Safe from temptation (you guarded us well,
Old barn,) on the new-mown hay!

THE PASTURE BARS

Down the lane to the pasture bars!
My prodigal thoughts once more
Go back to my father's calling me
From the narrow back stairway door:
"It's getting late, Bob; the milking's done!"
(He never had more to say);
With a bound to the floor I hurriedly dressed,
To drive the cows away!

A nodded "Good morning" from wayside flower;
From every tree a song,
(A symphony rare of warbled joy),
As the cows slowly browsed along!
The sun gently kissed the mist away,
That over the valley hung,
While odors of incense floated high,
From an unseen censer swung.

Then, too, when the work in the field was o'er,
While heavier chores were done
By older men, I trudged along,
In the path of the setting sun,
Calling, " Co' bos! co' bos! co' bos! "
And often the baby stars
Played hide-and-seek from behind a cloud,
Ere I left the pasture bars.

No more do I hear in the city's din,
(And never shall I again),
The country sounds in the early morn,
As I trudged a-down the lane ;
But I hope as I near the sunset hour,
No sorrow my pathway mars,
Greater than that when I called " Co' bos! "
As a boy by the pasture bars!

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